

Documented Essay
ENWR 106: College Writing II
Instructor: Gerrie Logan

Documented Essay Topics for Tennessee Williams “A Streetcar Named Desire.”

- **Topic Option One:** The final destruction of the Old South is symbolized by Blanche and the loss of her ancestral home, Belle Reve. This theme begins to unfold as the play opens when the two women, one white and one black, sit as equals on the steps of an apartment building while Blanche arrives on scene accoutered in the attitude and finery of a southern belle of yesteryear. She is an alien, a strange creature from another time, another place. Research the time period after the civil war and reconstruction period. What does Williams’ play say about class during this time period? How is the social stratification of the South and North represented by the characters of Tennessee Williams’ play?
- **Topic Option Two:** Truth and reality. Blanche lives in a cocoon of unreality to protect herself against her weaknesses and shortcomings. To preserve her ego, she lies about her promiscuous behavior in Laurel; she shuns bright light, lest it reveal her physical imperfections; and she refuses to acknowledge her problem with alcohol. Stanley effectively penetrates her cocoon verbally with his crude insults and maliciously attacks Blanche’s inability to face reality. Stanley, also, has his own problem: he lacks the insight to see what he really is—a coarse, domineering macho man ruled by primal instincts. Unlike Blanche, though, he is happy in his ignorance. For her part, Stella accepts the truth—partly. She acknowledges that Stanley is crude and that her apartment is cramped and shabby. But, in the end, she refuses to accept the truth about her sister’s past and about Stanley’s violation of Blanche. “I couldn’t believe [Blanche’s] story [about the rape] and go on living with Stanley,” Stella says. What does Stella’s denial of the truth and decision to stay with Stanley say about gender roles during this time period? Have these roles changed today?
- **Topic Option Three:** Examine the different faces of masculinity as represented in the men of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. How have the expectations of masculinity changed over time? Or have they? What does masculinity and sexuality have in common? How do these issues still present problems for men who do not conform to societal norms of today? Both Blanche and Stella are portrayed as highly sexual beings, what is the double standard presented in this binary representation?